

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2809

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 5606

MADRAS 0647 FOLLOWS. SENT TO NEW DELHI FOR ACTION ON 18 APR 77.
BEING RPT FOR YOUR ACTION/INFO.

QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE MADRAS 0647

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: KERALA CHIEF MINISTER K. KARUNAKARAN STEPPING DOWN

1. ONLY THREE WEEKS AFTER TAKING OVER AS CONGRESS CHIEF
MINISTER OF KERALA, K. KARUNAKARAN IS BEING FORCED OUT OF
OFFICE FOLLOWING CONDEMNATION BY THE KERALA HIGH COURT
OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY HIM AS STATE HOME MINISTER DURING THE
EMERGENCY. KARUNAKARAN'S TROUBLES TEM FROM A CASE FILED BY
THE FATHER OF A COLLEGE STUDENT, RAJAN, WHO DISAPPEARED
FOLLOWING HIS ARREST ON MARCH 1, 1976. WHEN ALL EFFORTS
TO FIND HIS SON HAD FAILED, RAJAN'S FATHER PETITIONED THE
HIGH COURT FOR A WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS. DESPITE KARUNAKARAN'S
CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS IN THE CASE, THE COURT HELD
THAT IT HAD BEEN PROVED BEYOND DOUBT THAT RAJAN WAS TAKEN
INTO CUSTODY BY THE POLICE (A FACT EARLIER DENIED BY THE
STATE GOVERNMENT) AND THAT HE WAS DEEMED TO BE IN POLICE
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CUSTODY UNTIL IT WAS CLEARLY ESTABLISHED THAT HE WAS NOT.

2. ISSUING THE WRIT OF HAVEAS CORPUS, THE HIGH COURT DIRECTED
KARUNAKARAN, THE HOME SECRETARY AND THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
OF POLICE TO PRODUCE RAJAN BEFORE THE COURT ON APRIL 21.
FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE COURT ORDER WOULD PLACE KARUNAKARAN

IN CONTEMPT OF COURT. THE COURT IN ITS ORDER HELD THAT KARUNA-
KARAN'S CONDUCT WHEN HE WAS HOME MINISTER WAS "CALLOUS IF
NOT HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS" AND THAT HE WAS GUILTY OF LYING
WHEN HE INFORMED THE COURT THAT HE HAD NEVER MET RAJAN'S FARTHER.

3. IT IS GENERALLY CONCEDED THAT RAJAN IS DEAD AND THAT
KARUNAKARAN AND HIS GOVERNMENT CANNOT PRODUCE THE BOY IN
COURT. OBVIOUSLY RECOGNIZING THE THE EXPLOSIVENESS OF THE
ISSUE, AND AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE COURT'S CON-
DEMNATION OF HIS BEHAVIOUR, KARUNAKARAN HAS REPORTEDLY
OFFERED TO STEP DOWN. KPCC PRESIDENT A. K. ANTONY, WHO
RUSHED BACK TO TRIVANDRUM FROM DELHI TO DISCUSS THE MATTER
WITH THE CHIEF MINISTER, INFORMED PRESS REPS THAT THE PARTY'S
ACCEPTANCE OF KARUNAKARAN'S OFFER WAS SUBJECT TO CONCURRENCE BY
THE CENTRAL CONGRESS PARLIAMENTARY BOAR , AND BOTH ANTONY AND
KARUNAKARAN ARE FLYING TO DELHI APRIL 18 TO PRESENT THE
ENTIRE QUESTION TO THE PARTY HIGH COMMAND.

4. IT IS TOO EARLY TO SPECULATE ON A SUCCESSOR TO KARUNAKARAN,
SINCE IT IS NOT MERELY A QUESTION OF CHOOSING ONE OF THE MANY
CLAIMANTS TO THE JOB BUT A MATTER OF CHOOSING ONE WHO
WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE RULING
COALITION AND CAPABLE OF LEADING A FRONT MADE UP OF DIVERSE
ELEMENTS. THERE ARE NOT MANY POTENTIAL CHIEF MINISTERS IN
THE KERALA CONGRESS LEGISLATURE PARTY, AND IT MIGHT TAKE SOME
TIME BEFORE PARTY LEADERS ARE ABLE TO COALESCE AROUND ONE
MAN. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER ACHUTHA MENON WILL BE AVAILABLE,
BUT THERE WAS SOME SPECULATION IN KERALA BEFORE THE ELECTIONS
THAT THE FORMER CPI CHIEF MINISTER MIGHT HOLD HIMSELF IN
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READINESS FOR JUST SUCH A SITUATON AS THAT WHICH HAS
DEVELOPED AND WAIT TO BE SUMMONED TO PUT THE PIECES TOGETHER
AGAIN.

MCCASKILL

UNQUOTE

SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

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